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DE RUEHNO #0158/01 1121609
ZNY SSSSS ZZH
O 221609Z APR 09
FM USMISSION USNATO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2891
INFO RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW IMMEDIATE 6327
RHMFIISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE IMMEDIATE
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEKJCS/Joint STAFF WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEHNO/USDELMC BRUSSELS BE IMMEDIATE
RHMFIISS/USNMR SHAPE BE IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T USNATO 000158

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/05/2017
TAGS: NATO PREL MOPS GG RS
SUBJECT: COOPERATIVE AIRSPACE INITIATIVE: THE MODEL FOR NRC
COOPERATION

Classified By: Ambassador Kurt Volker for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (U) This is an action request. See paragraph 2.

¶2. (C) SUMMARY: Russia and a wide cross-section of participating/financing Allies, including Poland, strongly support the NATO-Russia Council (NRC) Cooperative Airspace Initiative (CAI). Based on pledges of 75 percent of total NATO costs for the program (Russia costs are fully allocated), the NATO International Staff recommended and the CAI Working Group approved commencement of the initiative's third phase in February. USNATO supports EUROC/NORAD's proposal to seek NRC approval to test the CAI system to pass information between NORAD and Russia in the Bering Strait (currently, the system only passes information on Russia's western borders). The U.S. has pledged 200,000 euros for the NATO portion of the CAI project but has yet to transfer the funds to NATO. CAI is a excellent example of the type of mutually beneficial cooperation in line with the Administration's overall Russia policy and is the only tangible counter-terrorism project within the NRC. USNATO recommends that Washington meet our obligation prior to the June 11-12 Defense Ministerial, clearing the way for Secretary Gates to praise the project and brief on the Bering Straits demonstration. End summary.

¶3. (C) ACTION REQUEST: USNATO requests that Washington authorize transfer of U.S.-pledged funds for the CAI project. Mission further requests that Washington support a USEUCOM/NORAD request for a demonstration of the CAI in the Bering Straits for information passing between NORAD and Russia.

CAI BACKGROUND

¶4. (SBU) CAI is a radar track sharing system that provides air situational awareness along the borders between Russia and bordering NATO nations (currently installed in Poland, Norway, and Turkey). The system is designed to provide situational awareness in the event of a 9/11 style terrorist attack. The basic system is operational and currently passing information between participating nations. Phase Three seeks to develop tactics, training, and procedures. NRC members agreed in the CAI Working Group to launch the project's third phase based on NATO International Staff's assessment that the current pledges from NATO nations (75 percent of predicted NATO costs), including the U.S. pledge, were sufficient to start the phase.

15. (C) USEUCOM/NORAD staff and Alaskan NORAD Region have requested (and are seeking interagency approval) that USNATO seek NRC agreement at the May 29 CAI meeting to conduct a demonstration of the CAI system in which information would be passed between Russia and NORAD in the Bering Straits. USNATO strongly supports this request, believing it will allow the USG to take full advantage of the benefits of this program. The Russian Mission to NATO has also indicated strong support for this demonstration.

STRONG ALLIED AND RUSSIAN SUPPORT

16. (SBU) The participating members (Russia, Norway, Turkey, and Poland) and the other financing members (Canada, France, Greece, Hungary, Norway, Poland, and Turkey) strongly support CAI. All of the other Allies attend the CAI working group as observers; no Ally has voiced opposition to CAI. Allies and Russia often cite CAI as the model of mutually beneficial cooperation that the NRC should strive for. It is the only NRC program focused primarily on the defense against terrorism and its information exchange system provides for early detection of suspicious air activity, facilitating transparency, predictability, and interpretability in airspace management. The Russian Ambassador to NATO often praises cooperation on this project and encourages rapid implementation. Russia has been prepared for Phase Three and is waiting on the Alliance to catch up.

FUNDING

17. (C) NRC members have pledged approximately 75 percent of the predicted costs of 807,000 euro for Allies' contribution:

-- U.S. is the largest Allied donor by pledging 25 percent of Allied costs (approximately 200,000 euros)
-- Poland 167,000 euros
-- France 100,000 euros
-- Norway 50,000 euros
-- Turkey 80,000 euros

18. (C) Russia funds its participation/facilities in the project, and although exact costs have not been disclosed, the Russian in-kind contribution would likely make it the largest project donor.

19. (C) The NATO International Staff contends that 75 percent funding is the minimum necessary to go forward with Phase Three. Without the U.S. contribution, Phase Three will quickly grind to a halt, complicating our request for the Bering Straits demo. Therefore, Post recommends that the U.S. funding be transferred prior to the June 11-12 NATO Defense Ministerial. This would provide Secretary Gates a strong talking point that would be well-received by NRC members, particularly Russia, Poland, Turkey, and Norway (the participating members) and would prevent any project delays.

VOLKER